UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social
Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/C.12/2000/SR.56
29 January 2002

ENGLISH
Original: FRENCH

COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Twenty-fourth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE FIRST PART (PUBLIC)* OF THE 56th MEETING

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva,
on Monday, 13 November 2000 at 10.00 a.m.

Chairperson: Mrs. BONOAN-DANDAN

CONTENTS

OPENING OF THE SESSION

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT BY THE UNITED NATIONS DEPUTY HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

* The summary record of the second part (closed) of the meeting appears as document E/C.12/2000/SR.56/Add.1.

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of this document to the Official Records Editing Section, room E.4108, Palais des Nations, Geneva.

Any corrections to the records of the public meetings of the Committee at this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

GE.00-45748 (E) 141201 290102

CONTENTS (continued)

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

RELATIONS WITH THE AGENCIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE OTHER TREATY BODIES

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

OPENING OF THE SESSION

1. The CHAIRPERSON declared the twenty-fourth session of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights open and invited the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights to make a statement.

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT BY THE UNITED NATIONS DEPUTY HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

2. Mr. RAMCHARAN (Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights), summarizing recent events and activities for the promotion and protection of economic, social and cultural rights, said that the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights had decided, at its fifty-second session, to hold a forum on economic, social and cultural rights, referred to as the Social Forum, which, if approved by the Commission on Human Rights, would address among other things the relationship between those rights and globalization, poverty and the feminization of poverty. The forum would propose legal standards and initiatives, guidelines and other recommendations for consideration by the Commission on Human Rights, the Working Group on the Right to Development, the specialized agencies of the United Nations and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The Sub-Commission had requested the Commission on Human Rights to endorse that decision.

3. He had pleasure in announcing the appointment of Mr. Kothari as Special Rapporteur on the right to housing and that of Mr. Ziegler as Special Rapporteur on the right to food. He looked forward to fruitful cooperation between the Committee and the new Rapporteurs.

4. Regarding activities of the Office of the High Commissioner at the regional level, in particular the Asia-Pacific region, he said that cooperation was directed primarily towards the realization of economic, social and cultural rights and the right to development. A first workshop had been held on that topic in Sana'a (Yemen). Other workshops were being planned, concerning the impact of globalization on the right to development and human rights and concerning the justiciability of economic, social and cultural rights, among others. He was also glad to report that the Office of the High Commissioner was cooperating in the organization of a seminar on the draft optional protocol to the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

5. Finally, he welcomed the presence at the session of non-governmental organizations, experts and representatives of the specialized agencies. He also wished to express the deep gratitude of the Office of the High Commissioner to Ms. Butragueño and Messrs. Ceville and Antanovich, whose terms would expire at the end of 2000, and to thank them for their invaluable contribution to the realization of economic, social and cultural rights. The Office of the High Commissioner regarded the work of the Committee, like that of all the treaty bodies, as a cornerstone of the activities of the United Nations human rights programme.

6. The CHAIRPERSON welcomed the appointment of the Special Rapporteurs on the right to food and the right to housing and said that as far as cooperation with the recently appointed Rapporteurs was concerned two workshops recently organized by Canada on trade and

globalization and on the right to decent housing, the right to food and cultural rights had provided an opportunity for her as Chairperson of the Committee to establish ties with independent experts and Special Rapporteurs on the spot. It had been agreed with the latter that a meeting should be organized in the near future to define topics of common interest and work out joint solutions.

7. She also noted that, at the Committee's request, the Sub-Commission had agreed to undertake a study of article 2 on non-discrimination. Members of the Sub-Commission would also be invited to take part in defining joint objectives. In addition, the Committee ought soon to appoint a contact person on the right to development. On the question of cooperation with the international financial institutions, she said that there had been the beginnings of a rapprochement with the World Bank and the IMF as part of the anti-poverty drive. Since poverty eradication and the highly indebted poor countries initiative were to be the central theme of the meeting to be held by those two organizations in Prague in September 2000, the Committee had requested closer contacts, to which the institutions had agreed, appointing a correspondent to liaise with the Committee. Another noteworthy advance in the field of cooperation had been the holding in Manila of a seminar on economic, social and cultural rights, bringing together local human rights organizations of the Asia-Pacific region. The occasion had provided an opportunity to encourage the latter to convince their Governments of the importance of human rights and of the need to ratify the Covenant, and to allow the organizations to participate in the consideration of periodic reports by providing the Committee with information.

8. Mr. SADI thanked the Deputy High Commissioner for informing the Committee of the latest events in the field of human rights, and economic, social and cultural rights in particular. He was concerned, however, by the proliferation of treaty bodies and rapporteurs set up under international human rights instruments. Had the High Commissioner prepared a detailed programme defining the responsibilities of each body in order to coordinate their activities and prevent overlapping? With regard to the World Bank and IMF meeting at Prague, he would like to know whether, in the Deputy High Commissioner's opinion, the interest shown by those two international financial institutions was evidence of a real change of attitude. From the Chairperson, he would like to hear more about the atmosphere in which the workshops organized in Canada had taken place and what position that country adopted towards treaty bodies.

9. Mr. RIEDEL paid a particular tribute to Mrs. Robinson, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, for her courage in visiting the field, sometimes in extremely difficult circumstances, in order to defend the cause of human rights, peace and development, which were all closely linked.

10. Mrs. JIMENEZ BUTRAGUEÑO, drawing on her long experience in the Committee, emphasized the key role played by human relations in the implementation of human rights.

11. Mr. RAMCHARAN (Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights), suggested that, as far as coordinating the activities of bodies set up under the human rights instruments was concerned, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights could be responsible for defining the content of those rights, while the Special Rapporteurs could be given the task of establishing the facts, as well as promoting and implementing the rights. In that way, the two entities would complement each other. As far as relations with the international financial

institutions were concerned, it was for the Committee to define its own needs in the field of economic, social and cultural rights and convey them to the World Bank and the IMF with a view to initiating discussions.

12. The CHAIRPERSON said that she had been given a warm welcome in Canada and she stressed the country's great interest in the Committee's work. Her contacts there had been very constructive and she welcomed the confidence expressed by the Canadian Government in the treaty bodies.

13. Mr. CEVILLE pointed out that the work of the Committee did not duplicate that of the Special Rapporteurs because the two were different in nature: the latter acted in the field whereas the Committee's task was analytical, based on documentation prepared by the secretariat. The aim should be to work out a strategy that would coordinate those different approaches.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (agenda item 1) (E/C.12/2000/9)

14. The agenda was adopted.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK (agenda item 2) (E/C.12/2000/L.3)

15. The draft programme of work was adopted.

RELATIONS WITH THE AGENCIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE OTHER TREATY BODIES

16. The CHAIRPERSON invited the representative of UNESCO to take the floor.

17. Mr. SINGH (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) described some recent developments regarding the right to education. UNESCO, which attached high priority to basic education for all, was currently engaged in promoting universal access to education in accordance with the Dakar Framework for Action. On the basis of the experience acquired during the global Education for All (EFA) 2000 Assessment, the results of which had been submitted to the World Education Forum at Dakar in April 2000, a UNESCO working group was being set up to prepare technical guidance for the EFA movement, to create and sustain partnerships, support regional and subregional networks and ensure coordination between the various inter-agency initiatives related to EFA.

18. Also as part of the follow-up to the Dakar Framework, UNESCO with its Strategy on Development and Poverty Eradication had embarked on a rights-based approach to development emphasizing the indivisibility of economic, social and cultural, civil and political rights.

19. The high priority accorded by UNESCO to the right to education and its normative role in promoting that right had a significant bearing on its cooperation with the Committee, to which it attached special importance, as had been made clear in discussions at the one hundred and fifty-ninth session of its Executive Board, held in May 2000. Accordingly, UNESCO particularly welcomed the initiative taken by the Committee to strengthen

collaboration between the two bodies. To that end, it would be useful to hold a discussion on the right to education at one of the sessions of the Executive Board. It would also be opportune to hold consultations with the Committee and with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to identify joint activities for assisting the States parties to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to promote the implementation of the right to education, to introduce innovative methods for attaining the objectives of the Dakar Framework for Action, and to put into effect the recommendations formulated by the Committee after its consideration of national reports. In that spirit, resolution 15, adopted by UNESCO at the thirtieth session of its General Conference in November 1999, urged the organization to cooperate with the United Nations in conducting the seventh consultation for monitoring the implementation of the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960). UNESCO's Programme and Budget for 2002-2003 and its Medium-Term Strategy for 2002-2007 both emphasized the right to education and the growing cooperation between UNESCO and the Committee would undoubtedly further the realization of that right.

Hearing of non-governmental organizations

20. The CHAIRPERSON announced that there would be no summary record of the rest of the public part of the proceedings, which would be devoted to hearing NGOs.

The initial public part of the meeting ended at 11.20 a.m.